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CERMAK ROAD, CHICAGO RIVER BRIDGE
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HAER No. IL-50

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

CERMAK ROAD, CHICAGO RIVER BRIDGE
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor

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Location: I & M Canal National Heritage Corridor
Cermak Road crossing the Chicago River
(South Branch)
Chicago, Cook County, Illinois

UTM: 16 E.446830 N.4633400
Quad: Englewood

Date of Construction: 1906

Engineer: Isham Randolph

Builder: Substructure, Scherzer Rolling Lift
Bridge Company
Superstructure, Sanitary District of
Chicago

Present Owner: City of Chicago

Present Use: Bridge

Significance: Of all the highway bridges crossing the
Chicago River and Sanitary and Ship
Canal, the Cermak Road Bridge is one of
the few surviving bridges designed and
patented by William Scherzer.

Project Information: The Illinois and Michigan Canal was
designated a National Heritage Corridor
in 1984. The following year HABS/HAER
embarked on an extensive inventory and
documentation project of the 100 mile-
long corridor. Field work for this
project was concluded in 1988. Final
editing of the documentation was
completed in 1992.

Historians: Charles Scott, Frances Alexander, and
John Nicolay, 1986

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This bridge was designed by the Scherzer Rolling Lift Bridge Company and erected in 1906 by the Sanitary District of Chicago with Isham Randolph as Chief Engineer. Placed in operation on November 1, 1906, this bridge replaced a jackknife bridge located on the same site. The Cermak Road bridge remains the only William Scherzer patented and designed highway bridge surviving across either the Chicago River or the Sanitary and Ship Canal. The trunion bascule bridge, widely used in Chicago, was favored over the Scherzer rolling lift bridge by the city's engineers.

The Cermak Road bridge is a single-leaf, Scherzer rolling lift bridge, approximately 200' long. The bridge is constructed with an all steel superstructure consisting of a through truss with riveted gusset-plate connections. Bridge measures approximately 60'-0" in width. The abutments are concrete. A bridge tender's house stands on either side of the bridge; the house exteriors have been greatly altered and contain recently installed wood siding. The house is topped by a flat metal roof.

SOURCES:

"Chicago Settles with Strauss for Infringing Bridge Patent," Engineering News-Record, v. 85 (December 9, 1920), 1158-59.

Donald N. Becker, "Development of the Chicago Type Bascule Bridge," Transactions of the American Society of Civil engineers, 109 (1944): 995-1046.

Donald N. Becker, "The Story of Chicago's Bridges," Midwest Engineer, 2 (January 1950): 3-9.

C. Arch Williams, The Sanitary District of Chicago: History of its Growth and Development (Chicago: The Sanitary District of Chicago, 1919).